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State Communities Aid  
Association

The number of feeble-  
minded in N.Y. State

New York

[1917?]

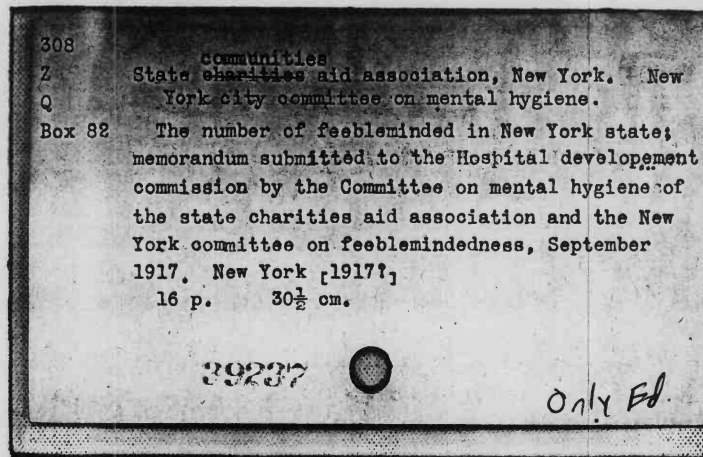
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THE NUMBER *of* FEEBLEMINDED  
*in* NEW YORK STATE

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Memorandum submitted to the Hospital  
Development Commission by the  
Committee on Mental Hygiene  
of the State Charities Aid  
Association and the New  
York Committee on  
Feeble-mindedness

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*September, 1917*

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Mental Hygiene Committee, State Charities Aid Association  
AND  
New York Committee on Feeble-mindedness

105 EAST 22nd STREET

NEW YORK CITY

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Dr. WILLIAM L. RUSSELL	-	-	-	-	-	Vice-Chairman
HOMER FOLKS, LL.D.	-	-	-	-	-	Secretary
GEORGE A. HASTINGS	-	-	-	-	-	Executive Secretary
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Miss JULIA F. WELLS	-	-	-	-	-	Social Service Director

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4 June 1920 Ins

MEMORANDUM AS TO THE NUMBER OF FEEBLEMINDED IN  
NEW YORK STATE SUBMITTED TO THE HOSPITAL DEVELOP-  
MENT COMMISSION BY THE COMMITTEE ON MENTAL  
HYGIENE OF THE STATE CHARITIES AID ASSOCIATION AND  
THE NEW YORK COMMITTEE ON FEEBLEMINDEDNESS.

No complete census of the feebleminded has ever been taken in any consider-  
able area, but it is possible on the basis of intensive studies in various localities and  
on the basis of conservative estimates of reliable authorities, to estimate approxi-  
mately the number of feebleminded in a given area.

The Mental Hygiene Committee of the State Charities Aid Association and  
the New York Committee on Feeble-mindedness, having examined the results of  
surveys made in New York City, New York State, other States, and Great Brit-  
ain, and having consulted various authorities, estimate that the number of feeble-  
minded in New York State is approximately thirty-five thousand (35,000) per-  
sons. This estimate is considered conservative.

Of the thirty-five thousand (35,000) feebleminded in this State, there are at  
present:

1. In institutions established for them .....	6,000
2. In other institutions not intended for them.....	4,500
3. At large in the community.....	24,500
Total .....	35,000

Although not every feebleminded person requires institutional care, the men-  
tally defective should either be cared for in institutions or placed under some sort  
of supervision in the community, best secured through institutional agencies. The  
above figures show the utter inadequacy of present State provision, indicating that

only one out of every six feeble-minded persons is being protected and cared for in an institution designed for them.

Following is a summary of various surveys of the feeble-minded in given areas, the ratio of feeble-minded persons to the general population discovered, and what this ratio would mean if applied to New York State:

#### RESULTS OF INTENSIVE SURVEYS ALREADY MADE.

	Ratio Feeble-minded	Applied to N. Y. State
1909—Royal Commission of Great Britain .....	1 in 217	45,000
1915—Porter County (Ind.) Survey.....	1 in 136	71,000
1916—New Castle County (Del.) Survey.....	1 in 262	37,000
1917—Nassau County (N. Y.) Survey.....	1 in 183	53,000
<b>Average of the above figures ..</b>		<b>51,000</b>

#### OPINIONS OF AUTHORITIES.

	Ratio Feeble-minded	Applied to N. Y. State
H. H. Goddard.....	1 in 250	39,000
E. R. Johnstone.....	1 in 250	39,000
1915—W. E. Fernald.....	1 in 250	39,000
1915—New York Commission to Investigate Provision for the Mentally Defective .....	1 in 242	40,000
1916—Report of Charles H. Strong in Investigation of New York Charities .....	1 in 294	33,000
1914—Massachusetts Society for Mental Hygiene.....	1 in 282	34,000
1916—F. Kuhlmann .....	1 in 200	48,000
Average of the above estimates.....		39,000
<b>Average of all estimates, surveys and opinions.....</b>		<b>43,000</b>
<b>Estimate of the Committee on Mental Hygiene and the New York Com- mittee on Feeble-mindedness .....</b>		<b>35,000</b>

## THESE FIGURES APPLIED TO NEW YORK STATE.

It will be noted that the surveys in Great Britain and in various states in the Union have produced varying estimates of the number of feeble-minded persons in proportion to the general population ranging from 1 in 136 to 1 in 262.

If applied to this State these ratios would give New York a feeble-minded population ranging anywhere from 37,000 to 71,000.

An average of the most important surveys places the number at 51,000.

Opinions of experts such as H. H. Goddard, E. R. Johnstone and W. E. Fernald, place the number at 1 in 250, making for New York State 39,000 feeble-minded persons. Other estimates of authorities and reports of investigations vary from 33,000 to 48,000, but an average of all opinions cited makes a figure of 39,000.

**An average of all the surveys and estimates of authorities listed would indicate 43,000 feeble-minded persons in New York State.**

In order to be very conservative, the Mental Hygiene Committee and the New York Committee on Feeble-mindedness have arrived at an estimate considerably below all surveys, all but two opinions of experts, and below all averages of the above figures, and have concluded *35,000 feeble-minded persons in New York State is a safe figure to serve as a basis for institutional provision.*

Enumerations of the feeble-minded who have come into contact with the authorities have been made in five states, including New York, as well as in New York City. Results of these censuses indicate the estimate of 35,000 feeble-minded persons for New York State to be very conservative.

An understanding of the various types of feeble-minded is essential to the making of an accurate estimate of the number in a given area and is prerequisite to determining a sound policy for their care, custody and training. Following is a classification of the types of feeble-minded:

I. Classified according to social mal-adjustment.

(a) The Dependent:

1. Too defective to attend or to profit by school.
2. Physically defective.
3. Irresponsible or neglectful parents.

(b) Defective Delinquents:

1. Young women liable to be victimized.
2. Young women with illegitimate children.
3. The sexually immoral.
4. Alcoholics.
5. Drug addicts.
6. Feeble-minded children with criminal tendencies. (Including the wayward and incorrigible.)

II. Classified according to their whereabouts:

- (a) Those in institutions provided for the feeble-minded.
- (b) Those in reformatories, prisons, jails and almshouses.
- (c) Those at large.

III. Classified according to degree of intelligence. (Classification adopted by the American Association for the Study of the Feeble-minded.)

- (a) Idiots. Mentally 1-2 years; unteachable, untrainable.
- (b) Imbeciles. Mentally 3-7 years; can be trained in simple manual work.
- (c) Morons. Mentally 8-12 years; can use tools. High-grade morons can do complicated work, but cannot plan.



SUMMARIES OF VARIOUS SURVEYS  
WHICH HAVE BEEN  
MADE.

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Following are brief summaries of the  
results obtained in the various surveys  
which have been made as to the number  
of feeble-minded:

## SURVEY OF BRITISH ROYAL COMMISSION, 1908.

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The Commission was appointed in 1904 to study the need for care and control of the feeble-minded. After spending four years in study of the problem, after making surveys of 16 different sections of England, Scotland and Ireland, after examining 248 witnesses and visiting various countries, including the United States, it made an extended report based on the most thorough, careful and extensive study of the problem that has ever been made.

"Out of the whole population of England and Wales (32,527,843), there were 149,628 mentally defective persons, not including certified lunatics, or .46 per cent of the general population—1 in every 217. For New York State that would make over 45,000 feeble-minded (45,565).

The types affecting this study which were considered were as follows:

1. Idiots.
2. Imbeciles.
3. Feeble-minded.
4. Epileptic feeble-minded.
5. Inebriate feeble-minded.
6. Deaf, dumb or blind feeble-minded.

The Commission found that of the work-house population, one-fifth to one-fourth were mentally defective. Of the criminal population, 20% were mentally deficient.

## PORTER COUNTY (IND.) SURVEY

By the U. S. Public Health Service; Taliaferro Clark and George L. Collins,  
Surgeons, and W. L. Treadway, Assistant Surgeon.

Completed May 10, 1915.

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The investigation included mental tests, a study of the physical fitness of rural school children and a sanitary survey of school locations and buildings. In Porter County covering an area of 415 square miles, with a population of 20,540, and a school enrollment of 3,103, medical and mental tests were made of the children attending 76 schools, Goddard's revision of the Binet-Simon Scale being used.

Of the 1,087 girls and 1,098 boys, seven, or .6 per cent. of the former, and fourteen, or 1.2 per cent. of the latter were so exceptionally retarded that their mental development at no time will be greater than that of a child. Combining these ratios, .955 per cent. of all the children were feeble-minded. In the opinion of the best authorities, the ratio of feeble-minded school children to the normal is a fair index to the ratio of the feeble-minded to the total population. Since a substantial proportion of those most in need of institutional provision are above school age, the combined rate discovered in the Porter County Survey was applied to the population of New York State after deducting the number of the school population. At this rate there would be a figure of feeble-minded persons in New York State of.....71,000

## NEWCASTLE COUNTY (DEL.) SURVEY

By E. H. Mullan, Passed Assistant Surgeon, U. S. Public Health Service.

1916

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At the request of the Delaware State Board of Health, State Board of Education, and Co-operative Educational Association, the United States Public Health Service undertook a sanitary survey of the rural schools of Newcastle County including the mental status of the children. An examination was made of 3,793 children showing nineteen, or .5 per cent. to be definitely feebleminded and in need of careful supervision or institutional treatment. In addition, fifty other children, or 1.3 per cent. of the total number examined, exhibited abnormal mental symptoms to such an extent as to be considered probable mental defectives. Applying the rate of the definitely feebleminded to the population of New York State above 14 years of age, we get a figure of .....37,000

REPORT OF THE NASSAU COUNTY SURVEY, JULY TO OCTOBER,  
1916.

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The Nassau County Association, together with the National Committee for Mental Hygiene and with the cooperation of the U. S. Public Health Service and the financial support of the Rockefeller Foundation, conducted a survey in Nassau County, N. Y., with a director, an assistant director, three assistant physicians, a psychologist and fifteen field workers. Classification was made first on a social basis and secondly on a psychiatric basis.

Nassau County covers a territory of 274 square miles, with a population of 115,827. Leads were obtained from overseers of the poor, justices, district attorney, physicians, nurses and neighborhood workers. Four districts were covered in an intensive house to house canvass, and the institutions for the mentally defective outside the County were visited to discover inmates who were residents of the County before commitment, revealing 634 cases of feeble-mindedness among adults, or a ratio of one feeble-minded person to every 183 of the general population.

*At this rate there would be for New York State.....53,000 (52,938)*

#### ESTIMATE OF SUPERINTENDENT JOHNSTONE.

Superintendent E. R. Johnstone of the Training School, Vineland, N. J., in an article entitled "Feeble-mindedness and Insanity," maintains that a conservative estimate would place the ratio of feeble-minded to the general population at 4 in 1,000. *Applying this rate to New York State we would have a feeble-minded population of 39,000.*

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#### ESTIMATE OF DR. WALTER E. FERNALD.

Walter E. Fernald, Committee on Prevention of Mental Defect of the National Conference of Charities and Correction in 1915, and Superintendent Massachusetts School for Feeble-minded, states: "It is conservative to say that there are at least four feeble-minded persons to each thousand of the general population." *This would give approximately 39,000 in New York State.*

# REPORT OF THE NEW YORK COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE PROVISION FOR THE MENTALLY DEFICIENT, 1915.

The commission after ten visits to institutions and sixteen different hearings at which men and women prominent in the work of caring for the mentally deficient throughout the State testified, gives the following figures:

*The mental defectives at liberty in the community are more than* .....30,000

*The defectives known definitely as feeble-minded who are without restraint  
or public control now number*.....21,263

There is no doubt that many more exist in the community. In the State

institutions created especially for their care ..... 2,939

Additional at Randall's Island ..... 1,332

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Total in appropriate institutions ..... 4,271

In almshouses ..... 1,580

It estimated that the feeble-minded form:

15 per cent of the inmates of our prisons and jails.

40 per cent of those in girls' reformatories.

20 per cent of those in boys' reformatories.

Mental defectives in penal and correctional institutions ..... 4,500

**Estimated total of cases**..... **40,351**

REPORT OF CHARLES H. STRONG, COMMISSIONER TO EX-  
AMINE INTO THE MANAGEMENT AND AFFAIRS  
OF THE STATE BOARD OF CHARITIES, 1916.

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The feeble-minded, excluding the epileptics, in State and New York City institutions .....	5,000
In institutions where they should not be.....	6,000
At large .....	22,000
<hr/>	
Total .....	33,000

*Estimates of those who should receive custodial care, 33,000.*

An untold number more who should be registered and under observation.

The Strong Report found that 20 to 30 per cent of inmates of correctional institutions in New York State were feeble-minded.

A large proportion of prostitutes in hospitals and institutions were feeble-minded.

A large proportion of adult criminals were mentally defective.

The other groups found to contain large proportions of mental defectives were:

Alcoholics.

Drug addicts.

Sex perverts.

Defective children.

"Mental defect is the greatest social problem that confronts the State."—Commissioner Strong's Report.



#### MASSACHUSETTS SOCIETY FOR MENTAL HYGIENE, STUDY 1914.

In 1914 the Massachusetts Society for Mental Hygiene estimated the feeble-minded in Massachusetts as follows: 2,701 in state hospitals; 10,000 at large; and several hundred others in almshouses.

On the basis of 12,701 feeble-minded including only the estimate of those at large and those cared for in institutions for the feeble-minded, there would be *one in every 278* of population. *At this rate there would be in New York State 34,128 feeble-minded persons.*

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#### ESTIMATE OF F. KUHLMANN.

F. Kuhlmann, in the Journal of Psycho-Aesthetics for September and December, 1916, estimated one feeble-minded person to every 200 of population, *making at this rate for New York State over 48,000 (48,439).*

Mr. Kuhlmann estimates over 51 per cent of the feeble-minded are not accounted for in the institutions.

ESTIMATES MADE BY COMMITTEE ON PROVISION FOR THE  
FEEBLEMINDED OF THE STATE CHARITIES AID  
ASSOCIATION, IN FEBRUARY, 1917.

The Committee estimated the number of feebleminded in the State as follows:

In institutions provided for them.....	6,000
In state prisons and jails.....	1,500
In reformatories for women and girls.....	500
In boys' reformatories.....	1,000
In almshouses.....	1,500
At large in the community.....	22,500

**Total..... 33,000**

Feebleminded women of child-bearing age in institutions for the feebleminded..... 2,116

In prisons, reformatories and almshouses..... 1,300

Estimated total of feebleminded women of child-bearing age in the State of New York..... 10,000

Of these there are at large in the community about..... 6,600

Many of the 1,471 inmates of Craig Colony for Epileptics are feebleminded.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION TO SELECT A SITE FOR THE  
EASTERN NEW YORK STATE CUSTODIAL ASYLUM

(LETCWORTH VILLAGE)

1907

"The investigation which has been made, therefore, indicates that there are not less than 20,000 epileptic and feebleminded persons in the State of New York. (On the basis of population, census of 1905.) Of these, 3,250 are already being cared for in State institutions; 1,808 are improperly confined in almshouses, and there are long lists of epileptic and feebleminded persons not under public care or in institutions, awaiting admission to the already overcrowded State institutions."

*Note:* It is interesting to note that at the ratio of feebleminded persons to the general population figured in this report, in the present year there would be 30,000 feebleminded people in New York State; and further that the report shows a constantly increasing ratio of the estimated number of feebleminded persons to the total population 1850 to 1890, probably due to the fact that the authorities are becoming more proficient in the recognition of mental deficiency. These figures tend to confirm the estimate reached by the present study.

**END OF  
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